

The Social Venture Network Series

marketing that matters

10 practices to profit your
business and change the world

Chip Conley
Eric Friedenwald-Fishman



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10 PRACTICES TO
PROFIT YOUR BUSINESS
AND SAVE THE WORLD

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Know yourself

PRACTICE 2: BUILD UPON YOUR MISSION

Most of you reading this book picked it up either because you are part of a mission-driven organization or because you want to make your organization more mission driven. You are likely part of a group referred to as true believers because of your deep passion for both the core work of your business and the way you manage your business to help create positive social impact that extends beyond the financial bottom line. Your passion for your mission has the potential to be put to work as a marketing practice and to help differentiate your business. In the last chapter we showed you that the belief that marketing and mission-driven business practices are incompatible is a myth. In this chapter, we will explore the power of a clear mission and the importance of using it as a decision-making tool for marketing. We will explore how to develop, nurture, and build equity for a strong brand.

An excellent example of a company building a brand and delivering on its mission promise to the customer is New Leaf Paper. New Leaf is a leading producer of paper made from 100 percent post-consumer waste (all content has been recaptured after being used and recycled). As its mission, New Leaf seeks

both to deliver a quality product to the marketplace and to change customer and community expectations. It promises “to inspire—through our success—a fundamental shift toward environmental responsibility in the paper industry.” New Leaf’s mission drives its marketing goals to increase market demand for its product, while its marketing success advances the company’s mission to change the paper industry.

To help drive this revolution in the paper industry, New Leaf’s Eco-Audit program shows how many fully grown trees, gallons of water, BTUs of energy, pounds of solid waste and greenhouse gasses were saved with each order printed on its paper. Its customers, ranging from ShoreBank to The Gap, print New Leaf’s Eco-Audit trademark on their materials to help demonstrate their own commitment to the environment and, in the process, become brand ambassadors for New Leaf. Many graphic designers recommend New Leaf to their customers because of this value-added feature, extending the reach of the New Leaf message to create what serves as a volunteer sales force for New Leaf. The company’s logo (a piece of paper with a corner folded over to reveal a leaf on the other side) conveys the link between its product and a healthy environment, and it conveys the message of market transformation that is at the heart of New Leaf’s business strategy.¹

Another excellent example of brand building and effective mission delivery is Stonyfield Farm. The company mission consists of the following: to provide a product of the highest quality; to educate consumers and food producers about the value of protecting the environment and support family dairy farmers to stay independent and adopt sustainable farming methods; to serve as a role model of a business that can be environmentally and socially responsible as well as profitable; to provide a health, productive work environment, and to provide an excellent return on investment to stockholders and lenders. The

brand's early focus on the importance of organic food and its tagline "For a healthy planet," along with Stonyfield's customer education programs, helped build the organic yogurt category and establish a high-value organic dairy industry. Stonyfield's marketing and mission success has allowed the company to garner a major market share of the overall American yogurt market.² Building upon a mission and establishing a strong brand create a virtuous circle: the more you do one, the more you are able to do the other.

Core Applications

To help you move in the direction of New Leaf Paper and Stonyfield Farm, we have identified two applications you can use to help integrate the "build upon your mission" practice into your business:

1. Clarify your mission and live it.
2. Build a strong brand and live it.

Clarify Your Mission and Live It

While you may know in your gut what your organization's mission is and whether the choices you are making are in sync with it, many businesses lack a clear mission statement, have a mission statement that is outdated, or have their mission in writing but do not see it manifested in the day-to-day operations of their organization. If we were to review the mission statements of handful of businesses, we would find a broad range of approaches—from comprehensive tomes that outline in detail what the organization does, to vision statements connected with strategic objectives, to philosophical constructs that delve into the metaphysics of commerce.

In fact, many of the strong mission-driven clients that Eric's firm has worked with find that while founders or senior leaders

are very clear on their mission, this clarity is not always evident companywide. When asked about the mission as part of a brand or marketing audit, a significant number of line staff and managers either do not know their organization's mission, or they define it in such a broad way that it is nearly unrecognizable. If an organization isn't clear about its own mission, you can be certain that customers won't be either. Decisions about how the company operates, communicates with customers, and delivers its products or services will be equally inconsistent. While this is true for any business, socially responsible businesses have a heightened responsibility to make their mission real and use it to drive both operations and marketing decisions.

To make your mission statement a living and powerful marketing and business asset, you need to think of it as we do: as the expression of the soul of your business. Your mission is the long-term, big-picture reason for your existence. When you look at your value and values proposition, your mission should answer the question why.” *A powerful mission statement articulates the core of what an organization does and the aspirational and often audacious outcome that the organization is pursuing.* We find that single sentence mission statements, written for both internal and external audiences, are easier for people within an organization to remember and are much more powerful as marketing tools. You can always convey additional information as a vision statement, philosophy outline, or operating principles. *But keep your mission statement short in length and big in vision.*

An excellent example of mission clarification is shown in the work of Chicago-based ShoreBank Corporation. ShoreBank has been America's leading community development bank from the time of its founding in 1973. As the organization grew, its focus expanded to encompass the link between environmental and economic well-being. The bank realized it needed an updated mission statement that was reflective of both the community de-

velopment and environmental focus and was inspirational and easy for employees of numerous affiliate companies to identify with and remember. The new mission statement, “ShoreBank invests in people and communities to create environmental health and economic equity,” became the core organizing principle of the bank’s new brand and a central message delivered across the entire organization.³ Ron Grzywinski, ShoreBank’s chairman and one of its four founders, credits the new mission with helping the whole organization understand their roles. “The words of our new mission are so strong—they really make a lasting impression. In our recent all employee survey, 89 percent of our employees agree that they understand how their job relates to the mission, which is a major improvement. They understand the links between ShoreBank’s community development and environmental missions. Clearly, the brand and increased strategic communication get credit for this change.”⁴ Imbuing the mission statement into employee recruitment, orientation and training, product and business development, customer relationships, and marketing messages has helped ShoreBank differentiate itself from the competition and grow its market share.

A strong mission, however, is much more than just a statement or an easy-to-remember slogan. In fact, if you stop there, you won’t realize the full value at all. A strong mission is a tool you can and should use to make decisions that support a socially responsible brand. Using the question, “How does this choice advance our mission?” and demanding defensible answers from your teams—and from yourself—will facilitate better decision making and create a stronger basis from which to communicate with your employees, customers, suppliers, the media, and, ultimately, the marketplace. In fact, you ideally want to transform all these audiences into messengers and ambassadors for your brand. To do that well, it is vital that you build a connection between each of them and a mission they can believe in—and one

that resonates with their own values. (We will go into greater depth about the power of people as messengers and ambassadors in chapter 8.)

To keep your mission front and center, we offer the following tips:

- *Examine it.* Even if it is relatively new, are you sure that it feels right and that everyone knows it?
- *Talk about it.* When making major decisions, planning a marketing campaign or designing a new product or service, include your mission in the discussion. At the beginning of major projects (strategic planning, brand development, marketing strategy development), find out whether people are on the same page about the mission. Ask your team, “What is our mission and how do you use it?” Review the mission statement and ask if it answers the questions, “Why do we exist?” and “What will be better if we are successful?”
- *Out it.* Make sure your mission is easy to bump into and easy for others to hold you accountable for delivering. Put it on your Web site, post it in your facilities, and print it (where possible) on your materials. Engage your employees, customers, and suppliers by telling the story of your mission.
- *Live it.* By integrating the mission into the daily operations of your organization, you empower managers and staff to walk the talk and customers to experience your mission.

Build a Strong Brand and Live It

If the mission is the heart and soul of your business, then the brand is the voice and personality. Every organization has a brand. Some brands are designed deliberately and some occur without planning. Some of you think of branding, like market-

ing, as a charged word. It is thought of as natural beauty by some and cosmetic surgery by others. We define brand as an authentic expression of an organization. *A brand is the aggregate experience that audiences (customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, stakeholders, and communities) have of an organization.* It is the embodiment of what we call the three Vs: value, values, and voice of an organization.

Great brands, like great mission statements, reflect the true essence of an organization's mission, culture, and the delivery of promise. Great socially responsible brands are aspirational in their reach. They push those who encounter them to participate in something bigger than the gratification of their own needs—they are world changing. It is imperative that the market's tangible experience of an organization rings true to the brand and, at the same time, the brand helps stretch an organization to advance and grow. While any brand should have these attributes, socially responsible brands have a heightened responsibility for authenticity as a result of stakeholder expectations and the need to drive success to financial, social, and environmental bottom lines.

An excellent example of authenticity in branding is found in Tazo Tea. Tazo started as a very small company in Portland, Oregon. The brand is authentic in its focus on the journey one takes with tea, the clear connection to tea-growing regions and the tea growers, and how the drinking of tea makes the customer feel. The names of its teas reflect the experience of each flavor rather than the particular tea leaf. Calm for chamomile, Refresh for peppermint, Awake for English Breakfast, and so on. Tazo's brand is also aspirational—its packaging and brand voice convey a global presence and an appeal to the tea drinker's desire for adventure and discovery.⁵

As the Tazo example illustrates, brand is much more than a logo and a slogan. It's a story. It's a compass. It's a baseline that audiences identify with, see themselves as part of, and

build loyalty to over time. Your brand helps connect audiences to your organization. It helps you make choices and prioritize marketing resources. It provides a launch pad for each effort that in turn leverages your other investments in marketing and the reputational value you have built for your organization.

An essential strategy to maximize all of your marketing resources is to establish a clear brand platform as a base for building all of your marketing strategies and tactics. As you make choices about how to market your product or organization, you should be asking, “Is this choice consistent with the brand platform?”

A strong brand platform includes these elements:

- Your mission statement—The expression of the soul of your business.
- Your brand statement—The essence of your brand and your core value proposition.
- Your core brand messages—The three to five lasting emotional or factual pieces of information that differentiate your organization.
- Your core values—The values that are fundamental to how your organization operates and is experienced.
- Your brand voice—The tone and personality of your organization.
- Your visual and audible identity—The name, logo, and tagline.

ShoreBank Corporation’s new brand platform has been a successful component of the bank’s growth. When ShoreBank was developing its new brand it sought extensive input from leadership and staff from across the company and then invited current and potential customers to participate in focus groups. Customers said that ShoreBank’s positive change message resonated deeply

with them. However, they also said they felt like they were not included as part of the solution with the draft tagline “Change the World.” In more than one focus group, a participant suggested involving the customer in the tagline by adding “Let’s.” ShoreBank now invites customers, businesses and communities to partner with the bank in advancing a shared vision of healthy and vibrant communities. Every day, ShoreBank’s brand issues the inclusive invitation: “Let’s change the world.” Every day, thousands of depositors, neighborhood businesses, and community vitalization organizations say, “Yes, let’s,” and in partnership with ShoreBank, they do change the world.⁶

Great brands are developed through understanding the vision that you and your team hold for your business, while also understanding the needs, desires, perceptions, and values of your audiences. As ShoreBank learned, to really know yourself you must understand what your customers and potential customers think of your organization, your industry, the products and services you offer, the position of your competitors, your role in the community, and the values relevant to their decisions about your business. Regardless of your marketing budget, finding opportunities to learn about audience perceptions in the process of designing or refreshing your brand, and to engage external audiences in testing your brand, will provide valuable feedback and a great return on investment. In chapter 4, “Know Your Audience,” we provide more examples and tips on how to learn about and from your audiences.

Once you have defined your brand platform, you must use it. Going through the exercise of creating it will not help your marketing efforts unless, much like your mission statement, you use it as an integrated part of your operations. You must live the brand.

By consistently applying your brand, each marketing activity gets a boost from the equity already established by the brand,

and you can leverage other marketing initiatives, building additional equity for your brand. In every organization larger than one person, the laws of nature and the beauty of individualism ensure a dynamic tension between adhering to the brand guidelines and creating your own approach. While the entrepreneurial instinct and sense of ownership that a brand can inspire is a major strength, it can be even more effective if it takes advantage of and builds brand equity. So how do we create cultures in which brand application is the norm and in which the brand really belongs to everyone? Two imperatives to make your brand come alive and to maximize its impact are

- Make it easy. Make it easy for staff to apply the brand rather than develop stand-alone messages, materials, and approaches.
- Make it mine: Establish your brand as everyone's brand instead of just the marketing department's or leadership's brand.

Make It Easy

Carrots work much better than sticks when aiming for brand consistency. The most frequent reason that brands get diluted is that well-meaning staff and managers lack the tools they need to communicate, or they're stymied by perceived or real marketing bureaucracies. By establishing clear and easy-to-use brand guidelines, and accessible pathways for assistance and review, you make the consistent application of your brand much more likely. Building and making available flexible and easy-to-customize branded tools (PowerPoint and ad templates, Web page templates, HTML e-mails, talking points, etc.) that meet the needs of frontline and management staff, make using the brand easier. In developing brand implementation strategies for clients, Eric often finds that the largest brand consistency com-

plaints (e.g., “Our staff is constantly making flyers that do not carry the brand.”) are an indicator of which templates or easy-to-customize tools are needed.

Make It Mine

We often think of a company’s leadership and marketing staff as being the guardians and messengers of the brand. But in reality, the brand belongs to everyone, and it is only fully effective when everyone walks the talk. How the phone is answered, how products are designed, how orders are fulfilled, how complaints are handled, how quality is managed, how services are delivered—each either supports or contradicts your brand promise. By making the brand real and personal for each member of your team, you invest in the most powerful means to build relationships with customers and communities. By investing in making sure your brand is owned across your company you are building the foundation for real and lasting brand equity.

Just because a brand has been developed on paper, is supported by leadership, and may even have guidelines and tools, one can’t assume that the brand is part of an organization’s culture. Good branding engages internal audiences as much as external audiences. After including your employees in the development of the brand platform itself, you need to roll out your clearly defined brand to your entire team. Every member of an organization needs to be seen as a brand ambassador and needs to know that this is expected of all employees in the company. To be effective in the brand ambassador role, all staff members will need training and tools to help them succeed.

Include brand training for all staff in any new brand roll-out and as part of new employee orientation. Make sure all employees get the opportunity to talk about the brand, to put the key messages into their own words, and to tell stories that

convey the brand. Share the best stories that illustrate your brand—it is so much easier for people to remember and tell stories than to regurgitate slogans. Whenever new employees, members of the executive team, or branch managers are asked, “Where do you work?” and then, “What does your company do?” their easiest answer should be the core brand statement because they have had the chance to use it and to make it their own.

Build in natural systems to reinforce the brand. Consider establishing a brand champion in each department or business unit. The brand champion is an employee who gets a bit more training, receives frequent updates and success stories to share, and can be a resource to peers. Provide recognition to employees who exemplify the brand in their work, and publicize to your internal audiences examples of your brand helping your company achieve its economic, social, and environmental goals.

So, remember to clarify your brand, to invest in building ownership of the brand across your team, and to integrate the brand into all marketing discussions to drive consistency.

—NEW SEASONS MARKET—

BUILDING UPON MISSION

New Seasons Market uses its mission and brand as compass points for making decisions that advance its values and strengthen its market position. Fundamental to its mission is supporting the regional food economy by sourcing local products wherever possible and highlighting the connection between rural producers and urban customers. Part of this effort involves repositioning food from being seen as a commodity, selected on the basis of price, to being seen as a handcrafted product selected on the basis of value. Connected to this aspect of New Seasons’s mission is a core pillar of its brand: “Really local and really good.”

New Seasons builds upon its mission and reinforces its brand across the organization. For years, before any law required it, New Seasons labeled where its produce, meat, and dairy products came from—often down to the actual farm.

Learning from small local farmers about the economic challenges they face from commodity pricing, New Seasons created a half-time merchandiser position to coordinate with farmers. This merchandiser places advance orders and provides purchasing projections so local farmers can plan ahead and get a fair price. This person also scouts for innovative and special produce that farmers are passionate about and brings unique offerings to New Seasons's customers. New Seasons's Brian Rohter focuses on the personal connection and says, "We have become friends with many of the people who grow and raise the food we sell. The personal connection really motivates us to do the best we can to make sure that they get fair pay for the work they put into the food we all eat."⁷ The fresh and local products mix is not the only way that New Seasons makes the urban/rural connection. Nearly every weekend, some of the region's farmers, ranchers, fishing boat captains, winemakers, and brewers visit the stores, sample their products, and visit with customers. They create relationships and increase customer knowledge of the area's delicious, nutritious, and specialty foods and beverages, and the people who produce them.

To increase the number of value-added jobs in the regional economy, New Seasons also added another half-time position to help existing regional food and beverage manufacturers and entrepreneurs develop products that will be carried at New Seasons. And it established a partnership with the state of Oregon's Food Innovation Center to help small entrepreneurs get the technical assistance they need to get high-quality products to market.⁸

Every day, in every department, New Seasons Market is advancing its mission and building brand equity as the ultimate local grocery store. In media stories, comments on blogs, and discussions at office watercoolers, it's not uncommon to read or hear comments like, "Why wouldn't you pay twenty-five cents more per pound to know that farmers are making a living, that your food is healthy, and that your tomato didn't contribute to global warming by flying across the world?" All good questions.

Know Yourself

A clear mission and a strong brand platform authentically inject marketing into the daily operations of your business and empower staff, strategic partners, and customers to serve as messengers. By inserting your mission into daily discussions and integrating your brand across the organization, you create a strong foundation upon which marketing strategies and tactics can be built to leverage each other and reinvest in your brand. Using these core aspects of your company's soul and identity as decision-making tools will help you make strategic choices that advance your mission, build your value, and align with your company's and your customers' values.

Now, let's take a look at how you define and plan for success.